

# **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES, ROLES, & RESPONSIBILITIES**

SHIBA HelpLine is a satisfying volunteer opportunity for people who **like to help other people**.

By giving free, informed, impartial health insurance counseling and education in your community, volunteers help make sure people have access to health care coverage and prescription drugs. That means **a healthier society** and **less socioeconomic disparity**. It **supports families**, **reduces stress**, and sometimes even **saves lives**. It **increases length and quality of life**. And, as a bonus, it **reduces expenses** for both consumers and government.

SHIBA HelpLine offers volunteers many rewarding ways to contribute to the community and assist folks with all kinds of health insurance problems.

You will **learn a lot**, **make a big difference**, and **be recognized for it!**

Depending on skills, interests, talents and experience, a volunteer can **choose** the most suitable and enjoyable role. *See inside this handout for a list of specific roles.*



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## **About SHIBA HelpLine Volunteers**

Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) HelpLine provides information on health insurance, public benefits, and prescription drugs via volunteers who are not professionals in the field but are trained by the state Insurance Commissioner's Office. **Volunteers are the core and backbone of this very successful program!**

Assisting people with health benefits is a serious but richly rewarding endeavor. Training commitments vary by role. **If you want to help people with their health insurance, health care access, and prescription access, you can!** If you want to assist fellow volunteers, you can do that too.

Each volunteer has a training plan, and is mentored by a "buddy" volunteer until he/she is ready to work independently.

In addition to requirements and "training paths" for each role, there are some general requirements for *all* SHIBA HelpLine volunteers. You can get more information on these by calling **1-800-562-6900**, or contacting your local SHIBA HelpLine sponsoring agency.

# Specific Volunteer Roles

There are four main role types for SHIBA HelpLine volunteers. Volunteers have opportunities for further specialization within these roles. Training requirements vary based on the role “track” a volunteer chooses.

## 1. ADMINISTRATIVE, CLERICAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

This type of volunteer assists the local sponsor with on-site management. Work may include:

- data entry/recordkeeping/tabulating reports
- reporting
- planning
- scheduling meetings, trainings, community events
- preparing mailings
- distributing materials
- providing computer expertise

Computer-literate volunteers can assist and train other volunteers, and help clients take advantage of on-line resources. More and more SHIBA HelpLine materials and information are available on the Web or by e-mail. **Web researcher/computer specialists** investigate and report on resources, news, and information that could be helpful to consumers, volunteers, or staff.

**TYPICAL TRAINING REQUIREMENT: 2-5 hours**

## 2. COMMUNITY EDUCATION/ PUBLIC SPEAKING

A volunteer in this capacity uses public speaking abilities and educator skills to present specific health/ insurance topics to community associations, clubs, agencies, and other groups. If desired, a volunteer can train to be a speaker on a specific topic.

**TYPICAL TRAINING REQUIREMENT: 10-20 hours**

## 3. OUTREACH

A volunteer in this capacity:

- represents SHIBA HelpLine at public events
- distributes brochures
- helps recruit other volunteers;
- participates in other activities to present basic information about SHIBA HelpLine to the community and encourage those in need to use the services.

**TYPICAL TRAINING REQUIREMENT: 10-20 hours**

## 4. COUNSELOR

### GENERAL COUNSELOR

Volunteers serving in this role counsel people one-on-one (either in person, by phone or by e-mail). They are trained to deal with a wide range of basic issues related to individual and group health insurance, government health benefits, health care access, and prescriptions.

GENERAL COUNSELORS can help:

- assess coverage needs;
- compare policies;
- complete/review applications, forms, bills, payments;
- find providers or facilities; and more.

**TYPICAL TRAINING REQUIREMENT: 20-30 hours**

*continued* 

### ★ Educator/Outreach Role:

#### **VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT SPECIALIST**

Volunteers can use public speaking abilities *and* outreach skills to introduce SHIBA HelpLine to new potential volunteers, support individuals or groups through the application and orientation process, and mentor new recruits.

## SPECIALTY COUNSELOR

A volunteer may also become a **Specialty Advisor**. Specialists are highly trained in topics/skills related to:

- disabilities
  - fraud and abuse
  - appeals/advocacy
  - rural access
  - low-income
  - veterans/Military/TRICARE
  - Professional Groups (e.g., retired teachers, military)
  - Disease Groups (e.g., AIDS, fibromyalgia),
  - Pre-retirees and Retirees/Medicare & Medigap,
  - Medicaid
  - long-term care
  - children's health
  - prescription drug access
  - advanced casework
  - multicultural or bilingual liaison
- and many others.

A counselor may even specialize in one type of insurance on the individual market--i.e., Basic Health, self-funded plans, COBRA issues, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Washington State Health Insurance Pool (WSHIP) or others. Experts are always needed to solve specific problems.

**Medical Billings Specialists** are another kind of specialty counselor. Many people are confused and overwhelmed by the flurry of paper generated by health insurance and government programs. Some volunteers help people sort out and manage health insurance paperwork, and complete medical forms, bills, and other paperwork. **It is very rewarding to help people pay their medical bills!**

**TYPICAL TRAINING REQUIREMENT: 20-30 hours**

**Prescription Assistance Specialists** are an important counseling specialty, as access to affordable medications is an increasing problem for many. A variety of Prescription Assistance Programs and new government programs are available to some consumers. Prescription Assistance Specialists help clients understand the requirements, determine eligibility, and fill out applications. **It is very rewarding to help people obtain medicines they need!**

**TYPICAL TRAINING REQUIREMENT: 5 hours**



## **FOR MORE INFORMATION: See These Documents**

*SHIBA HelpLine Volunteer Application*

*SHIBA HelpLine Volunteer Training Paths*

[http://www.insurance.wa.gov/consumers/SHIBA\\_HelpLine/](http://www.insurance.wa.gov/consumers/SHIBA_HelpLine/)

## **SHIBA HELPLINE**

is a statewide network of trained volunteers who educate, assist, and advocate for consumers about their rights and options regarding health insurance, health care access, and prescription access, so they can make informed decisions. The service is sponsored by the Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner.

# SHIBA HelpLine volunteers make a difference!

"I volunteered with SHIBA HelpLine because I was going through the agony of getting ready for Medicare, had finally figured it all out for myself, and thought others probably needed the help. I had decided that I should do some volunteering as a payback to society. I am volunteer today because I enjoy the feeling that I have helped people through their health program crises, or helping them to get health insurance when they have none. It makes me feel warm when people tell me that I really helped them." - *Duane P., Kent, King County*

"I first became a SHIBA Helpline Volunteer because I wanted to help people, but at the same time I saw this as an opportunity to learn. Some of the things I get out of volunteering are personal growth at all levels, and the flexibility. You volunteer on your own schedule, and you gradually learn more and more at your own pace. How much you do and put into the program is up to you. My favorite thing about SHIBA Helpline is that I find myself wanting to do more. Once I've had the satisfaction of being able to help one person, I find myself striving for knowledge, so I can help so many more. The most rewarding aspect of volunteering is hearing from a client how grateful they are to you for giving them your time and helping them. Just to know that I cared and it mattered makes all my time volunteering worth it, even if I helped just one person. But that's the great part. I get to help so many every day." - *Jessica M. Bradley, Longview, Cowlitz County*

"My favorite thing about SHIBA HelpLine is the excellent training and updating we receive on increasingly complex health insurance issues. This information not only enables me to assist clients in making informed decisions, but is also useful for my personal needs." - *Lorey G. Coe, Hoquiam, Grays Harbor County*

POSTAGE  
REQUIRED



SHIBA HelpLine  
Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors  
**LOCAL OFFICE sponsored by:**

**ATTN: NEW VOLUNTEER APPLICATIONS**